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HANDSOME.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER I.

In life's best bloom.

PENORNA HOUSE, Cornwall; time—a twilight evening in September; scene—the big drawing-room, red-curtained, and fire-lit, into which Lady Penrhyn's guests struggle, by ones, and twos, and threes, as the dinner-hour approaches. Nobody is extremely talkative; for what with scrambling about the cliffs, riding over the rugged moorland, and playing the last autumn game of croquet on the lawn, guests at Penorna are (as Mr Adolphus George Tempest, one of them, remarks) 'dead-beat' by the time evening arrives.

Witness to his own declaration, he props himself against the wall, and looks down with lazy satisfaction on a brown head, satin smooth; the rounded oval of a fair, clear cheek, touched by a delicate curtain of silky-fine lashes; a curved, rose-red upper lip; and a round, dimpled chin, supported half pensively on a round yet slender hand, white, but touched with the rosininess of healthy youth. The pretty picture is completed by a snow-fair neck, decked with a string of pearls, a muslin dress, crisp and clear, with a cluster of dewy, loose-leaved pink roses, pressed cheek to cheek, at the bosom; and—a dark shadow to 'throw up' the whole, in the person of Mr Ralph Brydone, a retired Indian civilian, possessed of considerable means, a violent temper, and a strong inclination for the society of Miss Netta Thursby; to which last development of Mr Brydone's character, 'Dolly' Tempest (so happily nicknamed at school, and so, for his girlish complexion, his good looks, his softness, and his vanity, called ever since) opposes himself with all the passive force of his sweet-tempered, indolent, uncombative nature.

The rivals are such a complete contrast, that it is quite impossible for Netta, young as she is, taking her very first flight from under her mother's wing, not to have some choice between them. She smiles for both, blushes for both, and

says 'Thank you' sweetly to both on small occasions: but then innocence is a better concealment than any amount of knowledge; and out of all those blushes, smiles, and pretty signals, who shall mark the flag of capitulation? At present, the problem is harder than ever, for she sits between the two—Tempest leaning beside her, Brydone bending over her.

Brydone is short, broad-shouldered, dark, more powerfully than gracefully built. He was probably an awkward, uncouth boy; but as a man, he has a certain solid ease of bearing—a brusque, assured, yet calm manner—which gives his words and actions weight with his fellow-creatures. Who would imagine that he was ever weakly carried away by passion and impulse; or that that agreeable, lazy trifler, Dolly, had the most constant will of the two? Brydone's face is square; the mouth and chin somewhat coarse, though well cut; the nose large, but fleshy, and springing abruptly out from between the eyes, which are black, and rather blank, and have not much eyebrow. He has thick whiskers, but only a slight moustache; coarse, curly, coal-black hair; and large muscular hands. He dresses in a perfectly unassuming manner; wears rather loose clothes; uses thick sticks; and inclines to wear his hat either on the back of his head, for comfort, or rammed over his eyes, for concentration of thought. Such is Miss Thursby's suitor, who now addresses her with all the uninteresting 'dog-in-the-manger' volubility characteristic of a doubtful lover in the presence of a rival. He cannot say what he wants to say himself; and he cannot bear the other should say it, or anything. Indeed, in Mr Brydone's opinion, Mr Tempest is a mistake, and should be wiped off the face of the earth altogether.

Pretty pink and white Netta, clean and fresh as a daisy, with her crisp, white frills and her bright up-looking eyes, is happily unconscious, as she will never be in years to come, of her position between these two—of the torments she must necessarily inflict on one of them. She chatters as much as Mr Brydone will let her, and even

breaks down his solid bass barriers with a silver treble stream, pleasantly aware of the placid, sky-blue eyes gazing down benevolently on the top of her head, which light up and lift their lazy lids at her stupid little jokes, though they remain superciliously serene at all the 'good things' anybody else may say. She wonders who will take her in to dinner; so do they—Brydone with gloom, Tempest cheerily. 'If I do, it will be just my luck,' he reflects. His luck, it may be remarked, is consequently of a very different shade to other men's (by their own account).

'Mr Tempest,' inquires Miss Thursby rather abruptly, scattering to the winds some improving observations Brydone is making, and plunging, with the rashness of youth, into a perfectly abstract subject, 'would you like to be a recluse?'

'Beg pardon, Miss Thursby?'

Dolly is always begging Netta's pardon, for he is far too slow to follow her flights, too calm to be put out by them, yet too amused and admiring to pass them over. So, on the query being repeated, he ponders it conscientiously, while Brydone takes the opportunity of resuming his own subject; but Tempest bides his time, and comes in tranquilly and politely at the end of a sentence, with: 'No, Miss Thursby, I shouldn't like it at all—costume, or cuisine, or anything.'

Brydone again continues his story; but is again interrupted, and curses the topic of recluses.

'What is "pulse," Mr Tempest?' asks Netta.

Tempest doesn't know; but after taking a broad mental view of the subject, makes a shot: 'Sort of cream-cheese, perhaps?'—whereat Brydone sneers openly, and Netta observes that Mr Tempest is 'quite up in recluses,' a modest piece of wit which is servilely applauded by both her auditors.

But now Lady Penrhyn, the hostess, makes a progress through the room, pairing off people for dinner, and Brydone flushes visibly through his dark skin, and scowls with unconscious anxiety. But the Fates are propitious to him for once, and poor Tempest is left behind, to take in a young lady who is really a very nice girl, but who appears to him so exactly like many other young ladies he has met, that he cannot in his inmost soul conceive the least reason for her existence.

Brydone is in high spirits, talks a good deal, and very well; pays compliments, perplexingly received by smiles, blushes, down-cast eyes; elicits some few soft replies of the school-girl pattern: 'It's very kind of you to say so;' 'Oh, how can you, Mr Brydone!' &c. which sound very endearing from those pretty lips; wonders why he is so in love with a child who cannot understand politics, or science, or anything that interests him; not so surpassingly beautiful—subject to small fits of wilfulness, little tempers, endearing little saucinesses. Dolly, sitting opposite, undisturbed by these speculations, which go so far to spoil a lover's felicity, and his success, observes Brydone's brilliancy, and its reflection on Netta, who, as yet, does reflect her companion of the moment; and straightway resolves, with a grave, unselfish air, that 'this must not go on.' Like the child of nature he is, he mutters in the napkin with which he wipes the soup from his moustache: 'Little darling! Such a brute as he is!' (the latter expression being used quite dispassionately, even pityingly); and leaning back in his chair, applies himself to gazing between two arums in the epergne,

at Miss Thursby's fair round face, and the rosy little fingers that crumble her bread, till an injured glance from a severe, gray-headed butler paralyses her. At this alarming moment, she glances across the table, and their eyes meet with comprehension, and neither can help laughing—and Netta blushes, and lo! Mr Tempest, to his own utter horror and surprise, blushes too—at which his young lady is uncomfortable, and Brydone indignant, and, of course, a pause occurs in the conversation, wherein Tempest madly addresses his neighbour, and is distinctly heard to say: 'Do you think butlers are unlucky, Miss Smith?'

Hopeless confusion falls upon everybody, and a general buzz of ridiculous conversation arises, during which, Tempest feebly explains that he meant to say 'arums.' 'But my eye caught that fellow—and—in short—don't you see?'

But the young lady is injured, cannot or will not see, looks at him awfully, and remains stiff and suspicious 'of that odd Mr Tempest,' for the rest of her existence at Penorna; while he laughs under his moustache at her air of offended dignity, and is most perfectly and amiably indifferent to it.

Dinner is over; butlers and arums alike cease to interest Mr Tempest, and he confuses them no longer, but leans back in his chair; and, during the inevitable interval of wine-bibbing, falls into a soft reverie.

'Tempest is awfully handsome,' says a guileless man, addressing the unfortunate Brydone, unconscious that if they were all Ojibbeways, instead of conventional Britons, the latter gentleman would be at this moment struggling with the former for possession of that golden-locked scalp of which he is so delightedly vain, and which he would certainly make a fight for.

Being, however, a Briton, Brydone replies with savage calm: 'Is he?'

'Ah, he thinks so too, you mean,' responds the guileless one, becoming dimly conscious of an antagonistic spirit in the above query, and anxious to keep the peace. 'Well, yes; he is rather a fool about his face.'

Brydone mutters: 'Confound his face!' but is fortunately unheard; and after a minute begins (being in an evil frame) to bully his neighbour, a young barrister, so severely on the subject of Indian judicial law, that this latter is reduced to stuttering idiocy, and loses all enjoyment of life for the time.

Meantime, Tempest, as I have said, leans back, and is quite in a position to be described without further delay. He is extremely fair—what would be called 'dazzlingly' so in a woman; the deep red curtain behind him throws up the pure pink and white of his transparent skin, the peculiar turquoise blue of his large eyes, the glossy yellow locks that wave, close-shorn, round his head; the arched, delicate brows and long lashes, two or three shades darker, which relieve the insipidity that is sometimes the accompaniment of excessive fairness, especially in a man. His features are as nearly like those of a Greek statue as flesh and blood will allow of: broad low brow, straight nose, fine nostril, short, deeply curved upper lip, oval cheek, rounded chin; imagine a little less flesh, a little more expression, though not a great deal (which is sad in a hero), a pent-house of floss-silk moustache, and in Dolly Tempest the veritable conventional Apollo stands before you.

Dolly's figure does not discredit his face: five feet ten of height, somewhat slenderly made, somewhat indolent in movement, but by no means without promise of strength, and apt, if it were not so, to bring a (physically) grander type into disrepute, its laziness is so provokingly harmonious and graceful; while his hands, though they might be a girl's, they are so absurdly soft, white, and slender, have done their fair share of deeds in flood and field. And now, what about the radiance required to light up, and shine through a structure so fairly endowed? Either the walls are unusually opaque, or the lamp has not yet fairly burned up, or is incapable of burning very brightly. For, melancholy to relate, Tempest has as little expression as a human being can have: the happiest, gentlest, most satisfied, almost childish smile, diversified rarely by a faint gravity, a slight cloud of pride or sullenness, is all; and, as far as anybody knows, truly indexes his character. He is always happy, yet ready to listen sympathetically if silently to the troubles of less lucky mortals, to do his mild best for them, always in the sweetest of tempers with others and himself; well aware of, and delighted with, his own good looks and good luck. There lies his great fault; he is vain, though in an innocent absurd way, that excites a sort of affectionate contempt in his friends. His vanity is like a child's, which points a little finger at its own image in a mirror, and cries 'Pretty, pretty!' and it must be a hard-hearted person indeed who can do anything but laugh when Dolly, advancing with a delicate fore-finger pressed on the bridge of his own irreproachable nose, inquires pathetically if there isn't a freckle coming there, and is grateful, as if for untold gold, when sympathisingly reassured on this important point.

Such, then, is Mr Adolphus Tempest, briefless barrister, rich in friends, rather poor in money, remarkably poor in relations; a 'good fellow,' which may mean a good man, and—also may not.

On the first movement of the first man towards the drawing-room, he rises to his feet, and betakes himself with unusual vivacity up-stairs.

'My innings!' he romantically murmurs, dropping into a chair by Miss Thursby's side; and as he never moves from thence all the evening, and very seldom takes his eyes off two downcast white lids; and as Miss Thursby is 'hoarse' when requested to sing, I can only conjecture that two people, at least, consider it appropriate that Penorna and Paradise should begin with the same letter; and that, arguing from the same premises, a third is of opinion that everything, Penorna included, is a mistake, and it is best to go to bed, and have done with it; which Mr Ralph Brydone, who is not of an age to seek sympathy, or find comfort in 'fellows' and smoking, and who, moreover, is not a woman, to put a good face on it, accordingly does, in disgust.

It was a calm and glorious autumn day; the pathetic, hectic loveliness of the 'Indian summer' lay like the year's dying smile over the world. Not a cloud on the deep blue overhead, not a foam-wreath on the emerald sea that stole up to golden sands and gray and purple stones, and left a few rainbow bubbles among the garlands of dry brown sea-weed and white shells that lie silent and daily witnesses of the divine wonder of ebbs and tides. The leaves fell early here, where the winds were

rough and high, and made a gorgeous rustling carpet, and left a fair fretted screen against the clear heavens; but in the sheltered gardens of Penorna House, on its sunny south wall, there were still crimson and yellow roses, and the flower-beds on the lawn were dazzling with late geraniums and verbenas.

Miss Thursby was sitting working in a little morning-room which looked out on the garden; she was still girlish enough to take an almost vital interest in fancy-work, despite the new and absorbing subjects which had begun to occupy her mind—of which, besides, she was rather afraid to think. In consequence, she was half-annoyed, half-nervous, when Mr Brydone, strolling absently into the room, started on seeing her, assumed a hungry aspect, and sat down with a fatal air of intention.

Netta made a little movement to rise, repressed it, sat down, shut her lips fast, and worked on defiantly, while Brydone sat gazing gloomily at her.

'You are very much interested in your work, Miss Thursby,' said he at last.

'Yes,' she answered with a spice of defiance in her tone; for she objected to the half-cross, half-patronising manner which was Brydone's unlucky method of shewing his preference.

'Too much interested to honour me with more than monosyllables, perhaps?'

'O no,' said she very indifferently, cruel with the ignorant cruelty of youth.

'And yet that was another monosyllable.'

'I beg your pardon; I didn't know,' she replied, in a docile, but, alas! feelingless tone. 'Besides'—trying to laugh, and turn it off, as she had heard others do successfully—'if it were, how dreadful for you, Mr Brydone!'

'Yes. "He jests at scars who never felt a wound,"' said Brydone bitterly, struck with, and despairing at, her utter childish unconsciousness. 'Miss Thursby, I see you don't understand me in the least; I can see plainly'—

Netta rose desperately from her chair, without knowing what she did, and stood staring at him imploringly with her pretty bright eyes, round and clear like a frightened bird's, the rose-leaf colour coming and going on her fresh cheek.

'Please, please, don't! I see perfectly,' she stammered. 'Please, Mr Brydone'—

Brydone was about to break down her feeble guard with some fierce reply, when Lady Penrhyn appeared. That experienced hostess saw the situation with half an eye, and having no mind for the probable climax, sailed in, and sitting down by Netta, arranged her draperies serenely round her, and plunged into conversation. Brydone would fain have escaped; but she addressed herself chiefly to him, and presently said to Netta, who sat silent and pale beside her: 'Child, how white you are! Run away into the garden, and get some air, and tell the gardener to cut me some roses for the table.—No, Mr Brydone, not you. You look extremely well, rather flushed, indeed' (with some malice); 'so stay and entertain me.'

Netta scampered away delighted at her dismissal, threw on her hat, and, haunted by visions of lovers bursting with proposals, made her escape by the back of the house, and so to the gardener's domain, where she delivered Lady Penrhyn's message, and then went strolling on dreamily across the sunshiny lawn, through the flickering light and shade

of the thinning woods, across a rugged bit of 'landscape gardening,' or wilderness—Lady Penrhyn's last caprice, and so out of a little wicket, and down a steep cliff-path to the shining sea, singing, smiling, dreaming, all the way.

She went and stood on a big gray stone at the very verge of the sea, in it, even, for a crystal fringe lipped and whispered round it, and looked along the gleaming beach, white with pebbles and shells, golden with sand, with the water deeply blue in its little inlets, purple and green under the gloom of the great crags, glistening emerald where the sunlight filtered through shallows to yellow, treacherous sand-banks. She looked far out at the dim, lilac headland with its light-house, the tiniest white pillar cut sharp and glittering against the intense azure, at the farthest point; at the lofty range of cliffs shelving gradually down behind her; but far away to the north, rising sheer and awful with jagged points, and sending a dreadful fortification far out to sea, round which the water boiled, white as wool, or swirled in cold, green-black eddies, crested with drift and yellow, churning scum. She could not resist wetting the tip of her little foot in the coy green ripple, or kneeling down, to the manifest detriment of her clean morning dress, to stretch after a spray of feathery scarlet sea-weed ebbing back with the gentle tide; dabbling her fingers till they were rosy and cold, and letting her broad hat flap into the water. Then she rose up again, with staid recollections of her recently attained womanhood, and, shading her eyes, again looked out seawards. It is only to the young the sea is not sad, either as the type of, or as an actual separation.

Somebody as happy, as foolish, nearly as young, in nature, at least, as herself, was coming up softly behind her, unheard on the wet, gleaming sands. A man in the sort of rough morning suit in which nobody but a Briton looks gentlemanly, but which is usually peculiarly becoming to him, if he be at all good-looking. His eyes were exactly the colour of the sky Miss Thursby was admiring (perhaps she admired it for that reason); the colour on his fair cheek was heightened, so that, if he had been a woman, he would have had a lovely complexion; but as he was a man, it was quite absurd; the sun played graciously on his comely yellow locks, and caught on his white teeth gleaming in a kind, tender, joyous smile. No girl had ever a handsomer gentler lover, more fitted for the young romance which forms all below the fair surface out of its own fairer imaginings.

'You look very happy, Miss Thursby. Might one offer a penny—no, a rose—for your thoughts?'

Netta turned round with a happy start and a warm blush, and saw him holding a half-blown, creamy bud in his gloved hand. Tempest held the sternest views of the deference due to the softer sex, and had solemnly (and extravagantly) inducted himself into a pair of the palest gray 'Jouvins' before going on his predetermined errand. (He had been known to catch a fearful cold in consequence of his punctilious gallantry. 'What! wear a greatcoat when I'm walking with a lady, my dear fellow? Impossible!')

He now mistook his companion's hesitation for refusal, and said, with that obtrusive and uneasy meekness to which vain people are prone: 'I haven't worn it, I assure you. It's been in my hand all the way, and I've got gloves on.'

'Oh, I didn't mean *that*!' answered she, confused into taking the rose. 'But I was looking at the light-house, and you startled me. Thank you; I am very fond of roses.'

'I wish I were a rose,' observed Tempest meditatively, casting a stone into the sea, to the ruin of his gloves. 'I wish—'

'O Mr Tempest, *would* you like to live in a light-house?' cried Netta, in almost entreating accents, taking refuge in her usual habit of abstract inquiry, and pointing a tragic finger at the edifice in question.

'Yes, awfully,' he replied.

'Oh!' said Netta, forgetting her momentary alarm in wonder, '*would* you?'

'I should, upon my honour. With one condition annexed.'

'What condition? I should like to know.'

'Really, Miss Thursby.'

'Really, Mr Tempest,' said innocent Netta. 'For'—reflectively gazing at him—'I should not have fancied that *you*— But what is the condition?'

'You.'

Poor little Netta! what a radiant, beautiful, uncomfortable blush flooded cheek, neck, and forehead, made her eyes shine and grow dewy, and her red lip quiver piteously pretty and childlike; poor little Netta, who, fairly silenced by this bold attack, could only give a little sob, and involuntarily cast a glance of appeal at her persecutor, which had, by the laws of nature, quite a different effect to what she intended.

'Yes,' continued Tempest, growing quite blantly courageous, 'you're the condition. I don't care—a light-house—a cave—a fisherman's hut—a cockle'—catching sight of one of these objects on the sand at his feet—'as long as you're there with me. I love you with all my heart and soul, Netta, and I want you to love me! Will you, *darling*?'

Whereupon, Mr Tempest, who, though sincere, was unoriginal, went down on his knees (into a pool of sea-water), and making a successful 'offer' at a cold little hand, awaited a reply.

'Oh, please get up!' sobbed Netta, without the smallest dignity.

'Not till you say "Yes"'

'But I shan't, for such a long, long time.'

'That means, you will in the end. My precious treasure! O Netta, if you only knew how much I'—&c. &c.

'Oh, indeed, it doesn't!' cried Netta, aghast at this wide interpretation. 'Think if any one should see you, Mr Tempest!'

'Well, if they did? Do you suppose I'm ashamed of kneeling to you?' There was something very pleasant, and stern, and manly in his voice as he spoke.

'N—n—no,' she sighed. 'Only—Mr Tempest—'

'I'll not stand being called Mr Tempest. Call me "Dolly" once, and I'll get up.'

Netta here became very prudent. 'That cannot do any harm,' she thought sagely. 'He really ought to get up; he's catching cold, and spoiling his things.' So she repeated with prim, timid little lips, and her long lashes quite on her cheek, 'Dolly.'

The faithless Tempest got up, and—promptly went down again.

'Oh!' cried Netta, scandalised. 'You promised.' 'Oh, hang it, I can't help it!' cried Dolly, casting his honour recklessly to the winds. 'You must say "Yes."'

'I can't.'

'Well, will you answer some questions, then?'

Netta nodded mournfully.

'Do you like any one else?'

'No.'

'Brydone?'

'Oh, no!' with a great increase of cheerfulness.

'All right. Would you like me to go away now, and never come near you again? Netta!' (pathetically), 'would you like me to go and live in—the light-house—all by myself, and be wretched?'

'You know I shouldn't,' said she tearfully, stricken to the heart by this melancholy picture.

'Well, then, my darling one, don't you see?—'

But I need not follow Mr Tempest through long and involved arguments. He was never clever, and he was less so than ever now; but, on the other hand, he was, despite his foibles, always manly, kind, and honest; and his love made him doubly so at this moment. Suffice it to say that (by the time he was well wetted) he had good and sufficient cause to arise from his moist position, and to declare that he didn't think there could be any other fellow in the world as happy as himself; and that as to Brydone!—Gloomy silence alone was capable of describing that individual's certain and abject desolation.

When, after a short interview of three hours or so, they had with difficulty resolved on returning, Tempest remembered that he had omitted a formality, and conscientiously remedied the mistake by inquiring: 'Will you be my wife, then, my sweetest?'

'Yes, by-and-by,' said Netta, who did not like this dry view of the subject so much as he did; life having, since his declaration, appeared to her a blissful standing on enchanted sands, looking over an enchanted sea, with Dolly always beside her, always telling her he loved her, and wanting to hear that she loved him. Tempest, however, differed from her, and was immediately filled with supererogatory rapture. 'My treasure!' said he. 'Then'—

But Mr Tempest's reading of the result of her consent did not appear to Netta at all the blissful consummation it did to him; for she withdrew herself with considerable vivacity from him, and exclaimed with unflatteringly vehement entreaty: 'O no! Please! I don't like it at all.'

'But, my darling!' urged Tempest, much wounded and surprised.

'No, no,' said she positively.

'Then you don't love me, Netta?' (with pathetic reproach).

'Yes, I do. O yes, dear,' said she, looking at him with a shy, coaxing smile. 'But I'd rather you didn't, yet'—

'Well, I suppose everything must come "by-and-by," my pet,' said Tempest good-naturedly. 'At all events, you'll take my arm, won't you? You have not quite such a hatred of me as all that!'

'Not quite,' she answered coyly; and so they went up the winding path, very slowly, leaving the bright sea and heavens behind them, and going back to Penorna, over which the sky was beginning to blacken ominously.

'We've had the bright part of the day together, at anyrate, my darling,' said Tempest, like a lover. 'And I hope, if there's any dark to come—in life, I mean—I shall have it alone.'

'In a light-house,' said Miss Netta saucily.

MAYFAIR BY A POET.

It is often urged against those who satirise vice in high places, that they have not lived on sufficiently intimate terms, or long enough, with the sinners in purple and fine linen to be in a position to describe them. This is in reality but an argument of those who sympathise with the offenders, and who use it (and not without effect) as a means of branding the would-be reformer as a person of mean birth, beggarly means, and altogether inferior 'position,' whose word must needs be without weight. That this is so, is made clear when the matter is political, and not social. Let any man attack the abuses of our public-school or university systems, who has had no personal experience of them, and it is almost certain, however great the pains he may take to be accurate, that he will make some error in detail; the cry at once is raised: 'Why, this low fellow knows nothing of what he is talking about; no public-school or university man could possibly say such things.' But if the accuser does happen to have enjoyed these superior advantages of education, they shift their ground, and exclaim: 'Ah, shame! this fellow [because he advocates some reform or improvement] is a serpent nourished in Alma Mater's bosom,' or 'an Eton bird who fouls his own nest.' The fact being, that all that is desired by the clamourers is to burke inquiry of any sort and from every side. Now, as regards social life in high places or elsewhere, it is not only not necessary, in order to depict its vices, that the satirist should himself have passed his life among them, but it is a positive disadvantage to him to have done so. He must have mingled with the people in question, of course, and on more or less equal terms; no just view can be taken from the kitchen stairs, nor even through the key-hole of the drawing-room, of what habitually goes on in the first floor. But familiarity with them in an observer destroys their salient points. A man who would describe to us the features of a great city, must do so when he has himself but just arrived there, and while the impression is fresh in his mind. In a week or a month, it has grown so familiar to him, that he scarcely knows in what it is that it strikes the new-comer. Similarly, although it is quite true that a clergyman who has had no experience of human sins and follies is not very useful in the pulpit, we do not require our divines to have spent their existence in dissipation in order to describe its evils.

These reflections have occurred to us in consequence of the reception in some quarters of the very remarkable poem entitled *Olrig Grange*.* This is the story of a young Scotchman, Thorold, of the middle class, who, of course, has 'doubts' about orthodoxy, is, of course, immensely clever in poetry and metaphysics, and (equally, of course) who comes to London to make his fortune, although he never puts so commonplace an idea before his own mind, but rather visits the metropolis to

* *Olrig Grange*. Macmillan & Co.

ventilate his opinions and make his mark in the world of thought. There he has the misfortune to fall in love with a fashionable belle, Rose Dewhurst, who, urged by her worldly parents, and, it must be added, by her own worldly instincts, gives this young Highland lover up; a disappointment which, if it does not break his heart, so works upon a naturally delicate constitution, overwrought by study, that he comes back to the old home, and the sister Hester, to whom he has always been a paragon of men (notwithstanding that she had eventually a husband of her own), only to die. Besides these three 'persons represented,' there are but two others, Lady Anne Dewhurst and the Squire, the 'cruel parients' of Miss Rose; and yet out of these five characters enough is made to give life and completeness to the whole poem. It has been objected to this work, as we have hinted, that its picture of fashionable life is too highly coloured, owing to the author's not having studied long enough the living model; whereas, in fact, the very contrary is the case. This part of the book is particularly graphic and life-like, probably from the reasons given above, whereas the descriptions of Hester and of the hero himself are always vague, and sometimes monotonous.

Who, that is a Scotchman at least, will not acknowledge the fidelity of this sketch of the small northern seaport, seen from Olrig Grange:

Eastward, you saw the glimmer of the sea,
And the white pillar of the light-house tall
Guarding the stormy Ness: a minster church
Loomed with twin steeples high above the smoke
Of a brisk burgh, offspring of the church
And of the sea, and with an old Norse love
Of the salt water, and the house of God,
And letters and adventure.

Here is Thorold's character:

Trained for a priest, for that is still the pride
And high ambition of the Scottish mother,
There was a kind of priestly purity
In him, and a deep undertone of awe
Ran through his gayest fancies, and his heart
Reached out its sympathies, and laid fast hold
On the outcast, the unloving, and alone
I' the world. But being challenged at the door
Of God's high Temple to induce himself
With armour that he had not proved, to clothe
With articles of ready-made belief
His Faith inquisitive, he rent the Creed
Trying to fit it on, and cast it from him;
Then took it up again, and found it worn
With age, and riddled by the moth, and rotten.
Therefore he trod it under foot, and went
Awhile with only scant fig-leaves to clothe
His naked spirit, longing after God.
But more for knowledge panting than for faith.
The Priest was left behind; the hope of Glory
Became pursuit of Fame; and yet a light
From heaven kept hovering always over him,
Like twilight from a sun that had gone down.

A very unusual sort of young gentleman this, it must be owned, and one who, in real life, we fear, might be found a bit of a prig; but still he can unbend upon occasion. The poem opens with a playful rebuke to his sister for keeping him waiting in the porch, when he had proposed an evening walk; and what he complains of at Olrig Grange certainly happens in less remote residences,

and indeed under every roof which is favoured by the presence of the fair sex.

Quick, Hester, quick! the old scarlet cloak
And silken hood are dainty trim
'Mong birch and hazel and lichen'd rock;
The sun is but a little rim
Above the hill, and twilight dim
Is settling o'er the leaping brook
Where we our summer pleasure took,
When youth was light of heart and limb,
And Life was the dream of a Fairy Book.

Quick! let us spend the gloaming there:
A plague on bonnets, shawls and pins,
And last nice touches of the hair,
That just begin when one begins
To lose his patience! Women's sins
Are not alone the ills they do,
But those that they provoke you to,
While smiling lips and dimpling chins
Wonder what can be the matter with you.

Well, minx! I hope you're pleased at last:
You've made yourself an angel nice,
And me a brute this half-hour past.
Now, did you ever count the price
When each new grace costs some new vice?
You fondle a curl—my wrath I pet;
You finger a ribbon—I fume and fret;
You'd ruin a husband worse than dice,
Buying your beauty at such a rate.

This is true and humorous; yet it is not the raillery of a young man, but of an old one. It should have been Hester's father who speaks, rather than a brother. Indeed these two young people had never been boy and girl, but at a very early age were serious, learned, and eager in the pursuit of science. Thorold, now on the verge of leaving home for London, recalls their occupations of old, with singular felicity of expression:

We turned the glass to moon and stars,
The Pleiads, and the Milky Way,
To Saturn's ring, and fiery Mars,
And Venus haunting close of day:
We bent the glass to watch the play
Of spasm-like life in water-drops;
And where the red stone upward crops
We hammered, eager for a prey
Of moss or fern from the old-world copse.
And O those days beside the sea!
The skerries paved with knotted shells,
The bright pools of anemone,
The star-fish with its fretted cells,
The scudding of the light-foam bells
Along the stretch of rippled strand
Spotted with worms of twisted sand,
The white gulls, and the shining sails,
And the thoughts they all brought from the
Wonder-land!

But all this is but a prelude to his metaphysical outpourings, which, however, at this early period (as is natural) are much more reasonable, and we may add readable, than when he has thought out the riddle of life more entirely to his own satisfaction.

Can the great God be ought but vague,
Bounded by no horizon, save
What feeble minds create to plague
High Reason with? We madly crave
For definite truth, and make a grave,

Through too much certainty precise,
And logical distinction nice,
For all the little Faith we have,
Buying clear views at a terrible price.

Too dear, indeed, to part with Faith
For forms of logic about God,
And walk in lucid realms of death,
Whose paths incredible are trod
By no mind living. Faith's abode
Is mystery for evermore.
Its life, to worship and adore,
And meekly bow beneath the rod,
When the day is dark, and the burden sore.

What soft, low notes float everywhere
In the soft glories of the moon!
Soft winds are whispering in the air,
And murmuring waters softly croon
To mossy banks a muffled tune;
Softly a rustling faint is borne
Over the fields of waving corn—
God's still small voice, we drown at noon,
Which is everywhere heard in the even and morn.

Poor Hester has not only her metaphysical
brother to deal with, but a lover (the Herr Pro-
fessor, who is supposed to edit this volume), who
is also metaphysical; who

Vows that she has too much creed
To have much faith; and daily shocks
Her thought with some mad paradox;
And in the ancient truth who sees
But an old bunch of rusty keys
Hung at the belt of the Orthodox,
To open a dungeon which they call Peace.

In consequence of these unhappy surroundings,
Hester grows metaphysical herself in time, and is
so greatly given to soliloquy and mist, that it is
quite a relief to get on to this portrait of a lady,
who has no doubt at all about what she wants, and
expresses it without any circumlocution to those
about her.

Lady Anne Dewhurst is a confirmed invalid—
without anything particular to make her so—who
passes her time on a crimson couch, with a rug of
sable, in a bright boudoir in Belgravia.

Beside her, on a table round, inlaid
With precious stones by Roman art designed,
Lay phials, scents, a novel and a Bible,
A pill-box, and a wine-glass, and a book
On the Apocalypse; for she was much
Addicted unto physic and religion,
And her physician had prescribed for her
Jellies and wines and cheerful Literature.
The book on the Apocalypse was writ
By her chosen pastor, and she took the novel
With the dry sherry, and the pills prescribed.
A gorgeous, pious, comfortable life
Of misery she lived; and all the sins
Of all her house, and all the nation's sins,
And all shortcomings of the Church and State,
And all the sins of all the world beside,
Bore as her special cross, confessing them
Vicariously day by day, and then
She comforted her heart, which needed it,
With bric-à-brac and jelly and old wine.

This formidable lady has a word or two to say
to her daughter Rose, on the wickedness of en-
couraging so ineligible an admirer as Thorold, in
preference to one Sir Wilfred, who has been chosen
for her. The girl has by nature some noble instincts,
which the brilliant tares of a gay life have almost

choked, but not entirely so. She still ventures to
think for herself occasionally, though never now
without regretting it; she has been so long in the
world of fashion, that she has at last become of it
in spite of herself.

The caged bird sometimes dashed
Against the wires, and sometimes sat and pined,
But mainly pecked her sugar, and eyed her glass,
And trilled her graver thoughts away in song.

Lady Anne begins her sermon by bewailing her
own bodily infirmities, the scientific turn that the
Squire has taken, and the wickedness of all about
her. As for Rose herself, who is giving up Sir
Wilfred for this Thorold, Where, as the vulgar say,
does she expect to go to?

But you have no religion—none.
It is the heart that's wrong, my dear;
If you had not a heart of stone,
You could not leave me lonely here.—
And men may do who have not clear
Decided views; they go about
Their Clubs, and hear who's in and out
And which is 'Favourite' this year,
And bet, and are dreadfully wicked, no doubt.

But women who have lost their Faith
Are angels who have lost their wings,
And always have a nasty breath
Of chemistry, and horrid things
That go off when a lecturer rings
His bell.—But *they* will not go off;
They take a mission, or a cough;
For men will marry a fool that sings
Sooner than one that has learnt to scoff.

You don't believe me: you go in
For science, culture, common-sense,
And think a woman sure to win
Because she knows the why and whence,
And looks at vermin through a lens:
And yet you've seen a score of girls
With empty heads, and silly curls,
And laughter light, and judgment dense,
Wedded to Marquises, Dukes, and Earls.

You cannot be a hypocrite,
To mumble out a false remorse,
And wear a look of prim conceit
Only to be the winning horse?—
Of course, you cannot; and of course,
I never meant you should. But yet,
You might feel true grief and regret
For sin; and could be none the worse
For the strawberry leaves in a coronet.

It's grace you need, Rose, to illumine
Your darkened nature. What an age
Since I have seen you in my room!
Though I have nothing to engage
My thoughts, except the sacred page,
And that sweet book which is so clear
Upon the Beast and his numbered year:
Yet all the while there's quite a rage
For some wonderful Mayfair novel, I hear.

Nay, tell me not you do not care
Although the end of the world were come.
It's very wicked to despair;
You should be gentle, patient, dumb,
Thinking that any day the hum

Of myriad angels, saintly crowds,
With rainbow trimmings round their shrouds,
May greet you at a kettle-drum,
Coming in glory among the clouds.

The end of all things, as her Prophet informs her
ladyship, is drawing very near, and it is become
absolutely necessary for Rose to marry as well as
she can, and as quickly.

Last week our Vicar plainly told—
He's a converted Jew, I know—
How seven fine ladies should lay hold
Even on the man that cries 'Old Clo';
To save them in the day of woe;
And proved it from the Prophets clear.
So then I thought I'd ask you, dear—
The poor man looked so shabby and low—
If you knew any Jew of the better class here.

For though all Israel shall be saved,
And all the lost tribes found again,
And all be proper and well behaved,
And all be free from sorrow and pain;
Yet even in heaven, it is quite plain,
As stars with different glory shine,
There shall be people poor and fine,
For perfect order there shall reign:
And one would not like to go over the line.

You did not come to speak of Jews—
They're Charlie's friends, and he can tell;
Nor yet about the Vicar's views
Of millenarian heaven or hell:
My dear, that's hardly spoken well.
But what, then, did you come about?
A call, a lecture, or a rout?
A flower, a beetle, or a shell?
Or a prodigy found in some country lout?

Eh! What say you? That puling boy
With the Scotch brogue and hungry look?
Your genius whom you made a toy
Last winter at your drums, and took
About with you by hook or crook!
Tush, tush! I do not like your set;
But what's come of the baronet?
As for the writer of a book,
You're not come quite to the curates yet.

To be sure, the baronet himself has not only a
good reputation for gallantry, but he is not so
orthodox as could be wished.

He wants to open the Museum
Upon the blessed Sabbath-day;
He wants the bands to play *Te Deum*
When we should go to church and pray;
It will be masses next, I say;
His views of sin are far from sound,
Eternal punishment, I found,
He will not hear of; and his way
Is altogether on dangerous ground.

But then, woe's me! you're all the same;
All turned from Bible-teaching quite,
All snared in folly, sin, and shame,
And blinded to the only light.
And he at least is of the right
Old blood, and has an income nice,
And never touches cards or dice
Or horses. It's a happy sight,
A man of his rank with a single vice.

This part of the poem is indeed as witty as any-
thing in *Don Juan*, while it pleads for virtue
instead of vice. The mixture of worldliness, and
what the poor woman conceives to be religion, in

Lady Anne's character, is most humorously por-
trayed, while the bitter jests with which her
remarks are received by her unhappy daughter,
are perfectly natural, although highly unbecoming.

The Prophets say that there shall be
A Highway and a Way: we read
Also of ships upon the sea,
Made of bulrushes; and we need,
Unless you think I'm blind indeed,
Unless I'm blinder than a bat,
No prophet to interpret that,
With a steamboat running at full speed
On the Suez Canal, like a water-rat.

There could not be a clearer sign
That now the end draws near in view,
And that it's Providence' design
To bring deliverance to the Jew,
And break their bonds.—Now, shame on you!
To scoff with your unhallowed wit;
There's almost blasphemy in it:—
I don't mean bonds of I O U,
Such as Charlie gives when he's badly hit.

But wherefore speak of things like these
To things like you, who heed no more
The murmur of prophetic breeze
Than creaking of a rusty door?
You walk along the solemn shore
Washed by the tide of awful doom,
While lights and shadows flash and gloom,
And neither wonder nor adore,
But stamp and 'pshaw' through the drawing-room.

The husband of Lady Anne is an excellent por-
trait. He fancies he is scientific, and dabbles in
all the new 'isms' and 'ologies.'

He thought he thought, and yet he did not think,
But only echoed still the common talk,
As might an empty room. The forehead high
And fiery eye had no reflection in them
To brood and hatch the secret of the world.

But yet he has some chivalry in his nature, and
some humour, and dearly loves his only daughter.
At first he will not listen to her, when she appeals
to him for leave to wed Thorold.

Tush, with your marriage and affiance;
The Medium waits me at the door,
That Pythoness of modern science,
Who brings back Intellect once more
To hear and wonder and adore.
She photographed by electric light
My old grandmother's ghost last night,
The very cap and wig she wore,
While the spirit sat by me there bolt upright.

I did not see Her; but I saw
The portrait like as like could be,
And felt a kind of creeping awe,
And old religion back in me;
A hand was laid upon my knee,
And there was music in the air,
The very song she whiled my care
Away with in my infancy;
And she lives in some kind of a sphere somewhere.

The Squire must not be interrupted in his high
communings, and bids Rose go to her mother.

She'll give
Excellent counsel in Heaven's name;
Right worldly wisdom, as I live,
And all in pious phrase and frame.
I wish I knew that little game,

It is a secret worth the knowing,
To clothe with Scripture language glowing
The devil's plain common-sense, and claim
The Word of truth for the truth's o'erthrowing.

Then Rose tells him that she has been to Lady Anne, and that there is no hope for her in that quarter; and the old man's heart is touched, and if it were not for his Charlie's debts and bonds to the Jews, there is no knowing what foolish tenderness he might not be capable of. But as it is, the spectacle of his daughter's wretchedness, the crisis of the situation, and the bitter sense of his own failure in the world, so rush together, that his wits take a more practical turn than they have yet known, and he states the whole social case exactly as it stands. First of all, he paints a woman's love, as perhaps he knew it himself in the far back days of youth—unselfish, simple, unworldly—and then contrasts it with the sentiment with which Rose is actuated.

If I could think you loved like this,
And had no half-heart for the world,
If perfect Love were perfect bliss,
Whose spotless flag you had unfurled,
And its serene defiance hurled
At toil, contempt, and hardships great—
But you have ne'er confronted Fate :
Your love is rosy, scented, curled,
And dreams of a carriage, and man to wait.

My dear, you know it not ; but yet
That is the truth ; I've read your heart :
You are no heroine ; you would fret
To play a common, obscure part,
To watch the coming baker's cart,
To tremble at the butcher's bill,
To patch and darn and hem, and still
To make yourself look neat and smart
In a twopenny print and a muslin frill.

There's nothing of the hero, Rose,
In any of us. We could fight,
I daresay, if it came to blows,
Almost like the old Norman knight
Who won our lands—Heaven bless his might !
We could not win them if we tried—
We can but shoot and fish and ride,
And lightly spend what came so light,
And I don't know we can do ought beside.

Under these circumstances (which he regrets, but which are irremediable), would it not be madness for Rose to wed this young genius, who has but three hundred a year? Rose allows that it would be so—is so certain of the fact, indeed, that she trusts herself to have a personal interview with Thorold, in which she gives him her reasons for declining his hand. And they are by no means commonplace ones. Indeed, what she conceives to be her chief argument is the conviction she entertains, that if he did marry her, she should drag him from his high aspirations and pursuits down to her own low level. This, to our mind, is an over-refinement. There is no lover worthy of the name who would not run that risk: the notion, indeed, is, like Thorold himself, priggish. The simpler and stronger objection to such an alliance is, that their previous modes of life have rendered them what the divorce courts term 'incompatible.'

I am not fit to live your life,
I am not meet to share your thought,
I am not able for the strife
Of any high and glorious lot ;

I am not worthy to be brought
Into companionship of those
Who heed not custom as it goes,
Who heed not what opinions float,
Who heed but the light that high Reason throws.

I love enough to part with pain,
But not enough to wed thee poor ;
I dare not face the way of men
Who nobly labour and endure,
Seeking a great life high and pure.
But I have one true purpose yet ;
I will not lead thee to forget

The splendid hope of glory sure,
Which was all your thought until we two met.

Finally, she draws a striking picture of the life led by herself and those of her class, and of the parasites whom it engenders.

A household ours where Home is not,
We carp and criticise, and we
Never do anything we ought.
Ah ! happy was your sister's lot !
My brother idles, trifles, spends,
And here he borrows, there he lends,
And I, like him, have never thought
Of doing a thing that makes or mends.

Yet we must eat and drink and dress,
And drive in carriages, and ride
In Rottenrow, and crush and press,
Bejewelled, at St James's, tied
Fast to the chariot of our pride,
Have spacious rooms, and sumptuous fare,
And waiting-maids and grooms to share
Our vicious idleness, and hide
The ennui and dreariness, shot with care.

It's all a lie, this life we lead ;
And breeds in all of us sloth and sin ;
The coachman wiggled and tippetted,
The maid who cannot sew nor spin,
The brawny giant that let you in,
Who should have been a grenadier,
They're good for nothing before a year,
Save lazy gossip, tipping gin,
And keeping a taproom, and drawing beer.

How could I hope to escape the taint ?
I've not escaped it—I am just
Like all the rest, on folly bent,
Like all the rest—devoured with rust
Of idleness ; a hollow crust
Of sentiment, and surface wit,
And scraps of knowledge. I am fit
For no brave life of love and trust,
Or a home where the lamp of truth is lit.

And with that she dismisses him, and in the end accepts Sir Wilfred. Rejected Thorold, instead of plunging into dissipation, as some would have done, plunges into his books, and destroys himself by over-study of some kind or other—it is not stated exactly what ; but, from a hint dropped here and there, we have a suspicion it was botany. On his return to Scotland, he is careful to observe that he found nobody in London at all equal to him in intelligence, and that folks in the South are generally but poor bodies. But this little outbreak of spleen may have been caused by his failure with the publishers, as much as with Rose herself, and may easily be excused on account of the state of his health. He had come back to the old home, in fact, but to die.

There are some beautiful touches in this last part of the poem. The excuses he makes for Miss

Dewhurst to his sister (who is naturally very wroth with her); his apologies for having loved Rose better than one so tried and true as Hester; the remembrances of their early days together that come crowding in upon him as he lies on his death-bed; his earnest appreciation of her love and care.

How the old books look bright in gold!
 You must have dusted them all day
 To keep them so from moth and mould.
 Those were school prizes near you; pray,
 Give me my Homer, that I may
 Smell the old Russia smell once more,
 And feel the old Greek torrent pour,
 Like plashing waves on shingly bay,
 As the King mused, wrathful, along the shore.

At last he dies, with all the summer sights and sounds about him that were his joy of old, before Fame tempted him to leave the Grange, and Hester.

Throw up the window; let me hear
 The mellow ouzel once more sing,
 The carol of the skylark clear,
 The hum of insects on the wing,
 The lowing of the kine to bring
 The milk-maid singing with her pail,
 The tricky lapwing's far-off wail,
 The woodland cushat's murmuring,
 And the *whisk* of the pines in the evening gale.

Fain would I carry with me all
 Blithe Nature's blended harmony;
 The half-notes and the tremulous fall
 Of her young voices, and the free
 Gush of full-throated melody;
 And like a child, I'm loath to go,
 And leave the elders to the flow
 Of speech and song and memory,
 And take me to sleep in the room below.

Olrig Grange is a noteworthy poem; and if less striking in those parts in which, it is probable, the author imagines its strength to lie, shews even there the indisputable marks of Thought.

LIGHT FOR THE MILLION.

EVERY age reveals its own peculiar characteristics in the way of the useful arts it introduces. In the nineteenth century, light was wanted, since industry had made such progress, and people were not content to pass their evenings in the comparative darkness of former centuries. From the large manufactory to the artisan's cottage, from the wigwam which the poor Indian makes of bark, to the mud-cabin of the European peasant, a light of some kind was needed to supersede the smoking torch of ancient days, and throw activity into family life by prolonging the evening. The Argand lamp, the first invention, was only known during the latter part of the last century; gas is of still more recent date. Numbers of unknown inventors have been unceasingly at work improving the mechanism of lamps, in order to escape the costly necessity of burning vegetable oils. These attempts have prepared the way for the mineral or rock oil, but chemical art has only in recent years discovered the way of extracting this precious substance from the schist or slaty formations where it is so abundant. The great number of these natural springs were well known, but science had not shewn the manner

of utilising them. It is to the Americans that belongs the honour of having given the last touches to this discovery. The native aptitude which leads them to seek the useful side in everything, and their feverish but patient activity, which seconds so well this turn of mind, has, on this occasion, been of great service to them and the public at large.

This petroleum or rock-oil had been known from very ancient times, but it is only for the last ten years that it has been brought before public attention. Everything has combined to procure it a great and terrible success. The light it gives out is truly democratic, for it furnishes a splendid flame at a very low price. The introduction it had to the public was accompanied by scenes which were sure to give it an unusual notoriety. Princely fortunes were made in a day, as in the times of the South Sea Scheme; tracts of country were in flames with it for whole weeks; ships were blown up at sea; cargoes were burnt in the docks, and the flames were communicated to the buildings and ships lying alongside; explosions in the heart of large cities, and still more recently, the finest capital of Europe half burnt to the ground, have stirred the imagination of the people in both hemispheres. But the new business increased from day to day, and passed victoriously through a series of violent crises, caused partially by the uncertainties of the then primitive modes of working, and by the fear of fire.

At the present time, the treatment and transport of petroleum are made in a well-arranged and careful manner; and the fictitious companies which sprung up during the 'oil-fever,' as it was termed, formed by unscrupulous speculators, have given way to serious enterprises conducted with honesty and integrity. In five years, the exportation from the United States has increased from one million to sixty-seven millions of gallons, and in 1867 it was supposed that the final limit was reached, and that foreigners required no more than was then extracted; but in 1868, there was a sudden and fresh demand, when the exportations reached nearly a hundred millions of gallons. At the same time the home consumption in the United States alone has increased to the amount of a third of the total production. There was a large reserve existing in both Europe and America, but to supply the later demand more than 13,000 barrels a day have had to be provided. New territories have been explored, both in Canada and in the Valley of Oil Creek, the original locality where it was found in such abundance, and which has furnished nearly sufficient mineral oil for the lighting of the whole world. It is now necessary to try other petroliferous zones, the working of which, being more difficult, has been postponed.

It is not in the scope of this paper to describe the procuring of the oil, which has been done many times previously, but rather to shew how it is refined and prepared for use in lamps. The oil, such as it is found underground, is a liquid, generally black, but often with a greenish hue; it is by distillation that the colourless product used for lighting purposes is separated. In Italy, in the Caucasus, and in Ohio, it is met with of an amber colour, sometimes almost white; but the most abundant, and the only one which can be distilled with advantage, is the black. The Americans have given it many names, such as rock-oil, and British oil,

because of the resemblance it presents to the schist-oil imported from Britain ; but its universal name is Seneca oil, from the name of a large and powerful tribe of Indians formerly settled in Canada and the states of New York and Pennsylvania. These Indians made use of it for many different medicinal purposes, and also for sorcery, for which also it was known by the inhabitants of the Mediterranean coasts two thousand years ago. Pliny describes twenty-seven kinds of remedies drawn from the liquid bitumen of Babylon and Zante. It was employed in the treatment of rheumatism, asthma, gout, chest affections, to prevent the putrefaction of wounds, and for the cure of epilepsy and intermittent fevers. Occasionally it was employed in war, and also as a means of punishment ; Pliny himself suggesting that Medea used it to consume her rival. Hahnemann, the founder of homœopathy, describes a variety of symptoms which the organic frame manifests under the influence of amber-coloured petroleum.

The first pioneers on the Ohio are said to have burned the crude oil in their lamps, which they found on the little river Muskingum ; this came no doubt from leakages produced by the filtration of rain-water through the ground. The use of this matter was, however, so restricted that the Virginian miners looked upon it as a real calamity when they met with veins of petroleum running through the layers of mineral salt. It was only in 1853 that a speculator of New York, a barrister, and afterwards known as the Oil-king, noticed a bottle of the liquid, which had come from a valley in the county of Venango, to the north-west of Pennsylvania, lying in a chemist's laboratory. Struck with the idea that this would replace the Scotch Boghead for the fabrication of mineral oils, he immediately bought all the land in this valley where its presence had been recognised. The following year, the Pennsylvania Rock-oil Company was organised at New York, to be followed by many other petroleum companies. The next step was to obtain the oil in sufficient quantities to distil it so economically that it could be sold at a lower price than the schist-oils.

The founders of this new business had to solve two problems, which had hitherto defied the chemist. For the one, they must set to work the best apparatus for distillation and rectification of the petroleum ; for the other, they must dig into the earth to reach the lower strata, from whence it was supposed that the little rivulets of oil issued. No anterior discovery had authorised them to encourage the hope that they would meet with these reservoirs, still less that they would be abundant. As for the first, it was a question for science to decide. The directors went at once to New-haven, to one of the professors of Yale College, a celebrated institution in Connecticut, where the highest class of education is given. They proposed that he should study in all its bearings the problem of the transformation of the original substance into a useful light ; they engaged to set up a special laboratory, and to pay liberally for the expenses of every kind which the nature of the work would necessitate. In order to avoid the evils in which too hasty speculation might involve the work of science, it was decided that the company should transfer its office to Newhaven, and that the professor should be made the president of the acting council.

Many have imagined the discovery of the jets of petroleum was a fortunate chance, bought at the price of small effort ; it was not so. During six years, the seekers arrived at no result, but their perseverance was at length rewarded. The flowing wells were reached, and jets of oil, water, and gas, mixed in one inflammable stream, spouted out of the earth, often to an immense height. It is, however, with its transmission and refining that this paper has to do, and not to describe scenes at the oil-wells. It was well when they had produced the article, but great difficulties were to be overcome before it could reach the markets in the interior and the sea-ports.

At first, they made use of barrels which were laid on large teams, and thus carried over the roads ; but it was found to be both dangerous and expensive. The barrels, though made on the spot with wood from the forest, cost much, and the return fare must be paid, though they were empty. The owners were under the thumb of the rough people who undertook the transport ; drivers and owners of horses, recruited from deserters or the scum of large towns, reigned as masters ; they felt that they were essential, and could not be dispensed with, so their demands threatened to swallow up the profits of the producers. Now the greater part of the petroleum is sent to its destination by means of oil-pipes of small diameter, which cross the runs, are carried under rivers, wind through ravines, and are passed over high hills, laid upon wooden props fixed into the ground. Some of these lines are four leagues in length ; in many cases the difference of level between the point of departure and arrival causes the oil to flow freely ; in others, it is necessary to employ a steam-engine. Special companies have been organised for this particular part of the business, which is regularly managed without giving rise to any contention. As every one is busily engaged with his own affairs, no one thinks of injuring the pipes, even when they are filled with the oil of a rival company ; they are looked upon as indispensable for the life of the country. The conductors of the teams too, dispossessed of their monopoly, made no riot or objection ; when labour can always find its market, they had no reason to recriminate, but soon started for the mines of Nevada or Colorado, to offer their services there, leaving the field free to the men of oil.

From year to year too, it is proved that it is more advantageous to distil the oil on the very place where it issues from the earth. A great movement towards concentration has commenced during the last three or four years. The distilleries of Liverpool, Hamburg, Bremen, Antwerp, Rouen, Paris, Marseille, and Genoa have gradually extinguished their fires. America now exports but a very small quantity of the raw material, so that the great number of refiners on this side the Atlantic have given up the contest, and become importers of oil distilled by Americans. Even now the refiners of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia are in some degree superseded by centres nearer to the place of production. At the present time, Corry, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh are the three points to which the largest quantities of the raw petroleum are sent to be distilled, put into barrels, and forwarded to every quarter of the globe.

When the oil issues from the pipes, it is run into tank-cars or bulk-boats, according as it is to be

sent forward by railway or by water. The former is the framework of a luggage-wagon, a truck on which are placed two reservoirs, similar to those used round the oil-wells, and will hold about fifteen tuns of oil. As to the latter, it is a boat resembling the coal-lighters made to pass up rivers; small steamers tow thirty or forty of these lighters at once, fastened together like long rafts. On one occasion, one of these rafts dashed against the piles of the bridge at Oil City: the destruction was immense; the contents were spread in streams over the Alleghany river, and it was a happy circumstance that the oil met with no spark of fire on the way, for the contact of water only serves to increase the virulence of the flames of petroleum. It is said that a boatman had the presence of mind to raise in haste, around the little island where he lived, a rough kind of pier, and thus was enabled to collect many hundred barrels of oil, which no one claimed from him. Such accidents are, however, very rare, and the cargoes generally reach Pittsburgh in safety.

In consequence of the many advantages afforded by a network of navigable rivers, this town, situated at the confluence of the Alleghany and the Monongahela, which unite at this point to form the Ohio, is the largest dépôt for petroleum in America. Not only does it supply the market for the interior, but it also takes a foremost place in that for exportation. It lies nearer to the Atlantic Ocean, by way of Baltimore, than those manufacturing centres which export by way of Philadelphia and New York. Besides, the oil always maintains there a comparative cheapness, and the refiners find exceptional facilities in a town of this importance, supplied with every possible resource in material, in workmen, in scientific institutions, and not least in its being situated in the middle of a basin of coal richer even than that of our own country. Thus, it is not astonishing that the largest refineries in the whole world should be found at Pittsburgh. The petroleum arrives there by water: from the boats it is pumped into iron reservoirs safe from fire. One of these reservoirs has the capacity of holding twenty thousand barrels, which will weigh two thousand five hundred tons—being a load sufficient for two or three first-class sailing-vessels. Many more of these reservoirs are in course of construction, so that two hundred and fifty thousand barrels will be refined in one year in each.

In order to refine the petroleum—that is to say, to extract from it the oil for lighting—the same process is used as that for making spirits of wine. The petroleum is heated in a vessel similar to the alembic in which the liquid of fermented grapes is placed; the oil vapour is condensed like the vapour of alcohol, by cooling as it passes through a winding tube surrounded by cold water. Those who have to do with these petroleum vapours must necessarily use the greatest precaution; in the great distillery of Pittsburgh each department is under special regulations, and occupies a separate building; that for distilling is built entirely of iron. There are ten alembics, each capable of holding three thousand five hundred barrels at once. Instead of being exposed to the direct action of fire, they are warmed by a current of dry vapour, which has previously circulated in pipes of three or four hundred feet in length, and these are surrounded on all sides by the flames of

three stoves. During the earlier stages of the work, they are heated to a low temperature only, so that the lighter gases alone escape. These, which are well known by the odour of ether which they evolve, are the only explosive element in petroleum, and are altogether different from the oil of lighting, properly so called. Under the name of benzole, they are used, in addition to that extracted from coal, for dissolving resinous substances and fat bodies. The lighting oil is distilled when the temperature is higher; the vapour produced during this second period also passes through the winding pipe of the alembic, and is condensed in a refrigerator, from which the liquid is sent to be washed.

At this time the refining process may be said to commence; it consists in purifying the oil by submitting it to a treatment of sulphuric acid, and then to another of some alkali. During this operation, the mixture is powerfully worked together for a long time by means of a sort of battledore moved by steam. Thus is obtained a beautiful colourless fluid, which acquires a slightly opal tint under reflected rays of light. Before sending this out into the market, it is submitted in the workshop to the 'trial by fire;' in other words, the makers assure themselves that when warmed to a degree of heat required by law, it emits no inflammable vapour. For this purpose, the bulb of a thermometer is plunged into a porcelain or glass vessel containing the oil, above which a small spirit-lamp is lighted. As soon as the thermometer marks that the temperature has reached the limit, that of a hundred and ten degrees of Fahrenheit, a light is passed over the surface of the liquid: if it have allowed any vapour to escape, this immediately takes fire, in which case the oil is returned to the alembics, to submit to a new distillation.

After this oil has been finally removed, that substance which still remains in the alembics has to be acted upon: the temperature is again raised, and a heavy common oil is collected, which is generally employed to lubricate many kinds of machines. It is during this time, that the paraffine is distilled; great care is taken that the temperature of the refrigerator should not descend to so low a degree as that this production should coagulate in the pipe, as it would cause a sudden stoppage in the circulation of the vapours, and the iron alembic would burst. The paraffine, still fluid, is directed into large cellars, where it coagulates after a certain time. Once congealed, it is placed under a hydraulic press; the liquid which runs from the paraffine during this operation is still an oily matter; it lies under the press in a flat rectangular mass, dry and white, recalling the white part of the whale. It is sold for the most part into Kentucky, where some manufactories of wax-lights are established. The last of the products contained in the raw petroleum is a kind of coke, heavier than that made from coal, and of a bright shining black colour; it attaches itself to the bottom of the alembics, and burns very well in the stoves like charcoal.

In those manufactories where the distillation is carried on by the direct action of fire, the most frequent accidents arise from the escape of the vapour from the petroleum. By covering the tubes with a thick layer of bricks, the chances of a rupture of the metallic pipes are much diminished; but it is important to be ready to extinguish in

an instant any conflagration that may occur. For this purpose, each of the furnaces has a large room in front of it, which can be hermetically closed by an arrangement of thick iron doors: two large pipes issuing from the stoves permit those outside to extinguish the flames by inundating this room, the stove, the conduits, and the chimney with steam. The effect of the vapour is instantaneous, but safety lies in the promptitude of the application; the men must be ready in a few seconds to flee out of the room, close the doors, and turn the taps.

To manage all these operations on the large scale adopted at Pittsburgh requires an able chemist. He is indeed the very life and soul of the business, and the real director; so the shareholders have built him a splendid house in a very picturesque part of the valley. When looking at that, the homes of the oil princes in the Fifth Avenue at New York may be imagined. As they have the whole world for their customers, their fortunes rest upon a more solid basis than is ordinarily supposed. The follies of some, and the disorder caused at first by impatient and covetous gamblers, were only accidents of the early period, and simply affected the outside of things.

The prodigalities of one of the early proprietors are still spoken of. He went by the name of Coal-oil Johnny, and was for some time a very fashionable person, as he found the means of dissipating about thirty thousand pounds in twenty months. On the borders of Oil Creek was a farm belonging to the Widow McClintock, which produced a very valuable stream of oil; those who worked it paid a royalty of two thousand dollars a day to her. She adopted the dangerous habit of rousing up her wood-fire by pouring the raw petroleum upon it, the result of which was, that one day she was burned to death in a frightful manner, leaving the farm and all her personalty to her adopted son, John Steele. The heir was twenty years old, of an easy disposition, rather low in his tastes, and poorly educated. Parasites were only too ready to flock around him, when it was known how much ready money had been found in the coffers of the departed lady; and from that time he began a course of boundless extravagance. To pay his Christmas visits, Steele bought the most splendid equipage in New York, and in the evening dismissed the coachman, giving him as a fee the carriage and pair. On another occasion, he set up a troupe of Christy Minstrels, each of whom appeared with a magnificent diamond pin. He now fills the post of porter at the very theatre which he organised. As to the farm, it was sold by auction to pay his debts, and in 1868 was still giving out three hundred barrels of oil in a day.

There have been many hypotheses advanced as to the origin of petroleum. Most American savants believe its origin to be organic. The decomposition of marine plants or gelatinous animals which lived in early times on the shores of primitive seas, would produce mineral oil by a process of distillation, when excluded from the air, just as inflammable gas is found in marshes. This would explain the presence of salt water which is in all the American oil-wells; the cavities of the rocks which have served as a tomb for these rudimentary organisms imprisoned the waters of the sea as well. In Europe, a country much shaken by eruptive forces, illustrious geologists and chemists attribute a volcanic origin to petroleum, as it generally rests

on or near strata impregnated with salt, sulphur, and bitumen. At present, no alarm need be felt at the exhaustion of the stores of petroleum; the quantity extracted each year being small indeed compared even with the springs already known, and others will doubtless be discovered.

A FLEETING FORTUNE.

COVETOUSNESS is supposed to be the favourite vice of age, which seems to me strange. I am old, and no longer hunger after wealth. What good would it do me now? My habits are settled, my passions are extinct: quiet, freedom from pain and care, and the preservation of my eyesight, are the only blessings I crave. I have enough for food and clothing; not enough to tempt others to flatter, cajole, and deceive me. But early in life I longed for riches with an unwholesome yearning; money seemed to me the greatest good, yet even money was not worth toiling for. When I indulged in airy castle-building—which was very often—I always pictured myself as finding a treasure; landing a double event at tremendous odds; having a fortune left me; or becoming suddenly rich in some equally facile manner—never slowly, by hard work. In many novels, the hero, poor, determines to achieve wealth and fame at the end of one chapter; and when the next opens, he has done so. The intervening years of humdrum are jumped. I wanted to jump them too. I was quite willing to be ten years older and ten thousand times richer, could such a bargain have been made. But it couldn't; and I dawdled the ten years away, and was just as poor as at the commencement. And yet I was once for a few hours, actually and literally, a rich man; and it happened in a way which my fancy had not pictured.

I was fond of travelling about, and my small means caused me to seek inexpensive modes of conveyance. My legs were the cheapest; and I walked all over England, Scotland, and Wales; but the coast stopped me, for I could not swim the Channel. Pay for my passage I must, but I would pay as little as I could help; so I chose a long sea-route from London to Holland. As the boat started in the small-hours of the night, I passed the evening in mild dissipation. Dined off a chop and cheese with a pint of 'cooper,' followed by a pipe and glass of rack-punch. Sat in the pit of a theatre from curtain-rise to curtain-set, only leaving when the brown holland appeared. Then a potato at a singing-tavern brought me to half-past twelve, and it was time to go to my inn in Holborn for my luggage. This was not extensive, consisting merely of a leathern bag, which could be worn when I liked as a knapsack; and with this in my left hand, and a stout oak stick tipped with a formidable ferrule in my right, I sought the Docks. This must seem so very eccentric to young people of the present day, that I think it better to mention that it was upwards of thirty years ago: cabs and habits of luxury have considerably increased since then. In the neighbourhood of the Tower, the streets were quite deserted, and it was a curious experience to hear one's footsteps re-echoing in the very centre of the capital of Bustle. The traffic, rolling dockwards by the main arteries of the city, only reached the ear as a faint, muffled murmur, like that of the distant sea. Turning into a small Place—a triangle of houses, with a paved court in its centre—

however, I came upon a group of three men, who seemed to be engaged in a scuffle, and supposing it to be a drunken row, I was passing on without notice, when one of them called out 'Murder!'

What a fine old English word that is—how expressive! The sight of it in large print gives the blood a pleasant curdle, and forces the purchase of an evening paper upon the man whose coppers would never be charmed out of him by any simple 'assassination.' But heard in the stillness of night there is a muttered horror in the word which is appalling.

I am not a chivalrous man; I shrink instinctively from incurring danger or even discomfort on behalf of a friend, let alone a stranger; but there was an earnestness about that cry which arrested my steps. Again, in a more stifled tone: 'Murder! Help!'

I advanced towards the group, and saw, by the light of a dim lamp, that two of the men were stooping over a third, who lay on the ground. One of these rose on hearing my footsteps, and warned me with an oath to go my way and mind my own business; and as I did not heed him, he raised his right arm and ran at me. Knowing something of fencing, I lunged as he came up, catching him low in the chest with the ferule of my stick, and he rolled over into the road with a gasp and a groan, and lay there, doubled up. His mate stood up, hesitated a moment, irresolute, and then turned to flee; I struck him over the head as he went, but failed to bring him down, and he got away. Glad enough to be rid of him, I went to the assistance of his victim, who still lay on the pavement; but he was not seriously injured; and when I had loosened his neckcloth, and poured some of the contents of my travelling flask down his throat, he was able to get up. Fortunately for him, garrotting had not been yet cultivated as a science, and he was only quarter-throttled.

His first care was to feel a pocket inside his waistcoat, having done which, he said in a tone of intense relief: 'They have not got it! Thanks to you, young man, they have not got it! You won't leave me? You will see me to the boat? I can walk. O yes, I am better now.'

'Don't be afraid,' said I; 'I will not leave you till you are safe. What boat do you mean?'

'The Rotterdam.'

'Why, I am going by that myself. I am glad you can walk, for we have not got overmuch time to lose.'

We were not more than a quarter of a mile from the wharf, and had half an hour to do it in; but I did not think it incumbent upon me to go to the assistance of the man who had served me as a *glaston*, and who still lay in the road; so we went our way, and left him there; and whether he came round presently, or received any permanent injury to his constitution from that poke in the stomach, I know not.

The man I had rescued was gray-haired, with a wizened face deeply scored by wrinkles, and a frame which did not seem capable of making the stubborn resistance which he must have done in defence of his property. The cab in which he started for the Docks had broken down, and afraid of being late, he had taken a short-cut through the by-streets on foot, and had been set upon by the rascals with whom I found him. That was the simple account he gave me on our way to the wharf, which we reached in time. As for his luggage, that had been taken on board in the

morning, when his berth was chosen. The latter precaution I had neglected, but found no difficulty in securing sleeping accommodation, for the vessel was not crowded; indeed, there were but three passengers besides myself and the old man. Not being used to five hours of theatre, followed by a walk and an encounter with street-thieves, I was tired, and turned in soon after we started.

When I awoke, there was no vibration, no din of revolving paddles. Had I slept through the passage, and were we at our journey's end? Hardly, for in that case we should be in still water, not swaying to this side and that, bending backwards, pitching forwards, and bringing ourselves up with a jerk, like a sleepy man during a long sermon, as we were doing. I sat up and looked over the side of my berth, which was on the upper tier, and saw the head of my rescued old man peering out from the sleeping-place below.

'Do you think there is anything the matter?' he asked. 'Why are we not going on? Why does that bell keep on ringing?'

Roused by this unpleasant suggestion of peril, I wriggled off my shelf, managed, after several bad shots, to get my feet into giddy boots and my arms into intoxicated coat-sleeves, reeled up to the deck, and found a fog.

It was one of the densest I have ever been in; you could not see across the deck, and a man standing a couple of yards off resembled a figure in one of Turner's later pictures. The effect was the more confusing from the mist not being stationary, for a stiffish breeze sent rolling masses of it sweeping over us. The waves of fog mingled with the waves of water, and the eye could not distinguish which was which, while the large bell forward kept up a continual tinkle, tinkle, in muffled tones, as though the fog were composed of wool, pulled out very fine, particles of which had clogged the clapper.

I am happy to be able to boast that I did not worry the captain, as passengers are so foolishly apt to do when things look a little awkward. But I got near him, and listened and observed, and made out by degrees that we were somewhere in the channels about the Nore, and in momentary expectation of being run into, or grounding on the sands, and that, when we revolved our paddles, which we did at intervals, the chance of running into somebody else was added. The lead was constantly being heaved, and at one time when the water shoaled very much, the mate suggested anchoring, but the captain ruled that this would increase our risk of being run down, and preferred keeping loose and able to dodge about—of course, using nautical expressions, which I cannot pretend to repeat.

Directly the state of affairs became obvious to me, I went below and brought up my old man, for in case of some other ship's beak suddenly crushing into our sides, the prospects of those who were under water-mark seemed—if you will pardon a slang term in consideration of its extraordinary aptness—very fishy. And he was grateful, for the danger of a collision was very real. Probably the mouth of the Thames is familiar to you, but if not, know that vessels enter it by a number of roads, duly buoyed out and light-housed. These roads or channels being narrow, and the number of outward and homeward bound ships very great, a thick fog or a snow-storm is a serious peril.

About noon the wind increased in violence, and blew the fog away, so that we were able to go on fearlessly; and by and by, when the excitement had calmed down, my old man grew pleasant and chatty.

The sea ran rather high; but as neither of us suffered from sea-sickness, this tended to raise our spirits, as the strong air sharpened our appetites; and though every now and then a big wave would shiver itself against our weather-bow, and send a shower of its fragments sweeping across the deck, we got well under the shelter of the paddle-box, and enjoyed it.

To my surprise, on one occasion when he wanted to draw my attention to something, I happening to be looking another way, my companion spoke to me by name.

'You know me?' I asked.

'Certainly,' he replied; 'you sold me some jewels five years ago. I even remember the circumstances. A property had to be divided amongst the various members of your family, and the diamonds were too valuable to be allotted to any individual, so that it was necessary to turn them into money; and you had the management of the transaction, which was carried out through my agency.'

He was perfectly accurate in the account which he gave me, even recalling to my mind certain minutiae which I had forgotten, though surely they ought to have impressed me more strongly than him. I presently remembered his face, however; indeed, it had struck me as familiar when the lamp-light first fell upon it the night before. But his hair had turned from black to white, and the loss of his teeth had caused his cheeks to fall in—changes that alter the physiognomy more radically than any other which leave the eyes untouched. I suppose that he had made inquiries about me at the time when the business alluded to was transacted, and that their result was such as to inspire him with confidence, for he talked to me about his present affairs with a freedom which surprised me, though I *had* done him a good turn. For, in truth, he had that on him which it was as well not to blab about. He carried in an inner pocket of his waistcoat no fewer than twenty-five rough diamonds, emeralds, and sapphires, which he was taking to Holland to be cut. 'I am too old for such business now,' he said. 'If you had not come to my rescue last night, and those rascals had got hold of the stones, I should have been ruined, ruined!'

Whether they were his own, or he had but a share in them, or whether they were merely intrusted to him, I cannot say; he did not tell me; but from the hints he threw out of their value, which, if the diamonds were at all worthy of the expense he was prepared to incur for cutting them, must have been enormous—enormous in the ordinary, not the Monte Cristo or Lothair sense—it is not probable that they were entirely the property of one man.

While we were conversing, the wind was growing in violence, till at length we could not make ourselves heard without difficulty, and the paddle-boxes no longer afforded much protection against the spray, which searched the whole deck.

The skipper of a passage-boat always takes the freedom of a passenger from sickness at dinner-time as a personal compliment; and as our present

captain had helped each of us to the everlasting boiled mutton twice, we had a right to his good opinion. So he came up to us, and told the diamond-merchant that he thought there was going to be a little wind, and he would be more comfortable below. On the old man acquiescing, he took him in tow, and guided him safely to the cabin-stairs, to my great relief, for I feared that duty would devolve on me; and my legs not being so nautical as my stomach, we should infallibly have rolled together in the lee-scuppers (whatever they may be), or overboard. The captain came back presently; and as he passed me, he shouted in my ear: 'I'd go too, if I were you.' 'Presently,' I roared in reply. 'This is a new sight to me. Just five minutes more.'

'Hold on tight, then.'

No need to bid me 'hold tight.' I was clinging to the rope I grasped with great tenacity, for every now and then the deck became so steep that my feet slipped from under me, and the wave-tops that left their own element and came flying across us, struck me with a force which I had not hitherto attributed to water, unless shot out of the hose of an engine.

It was a grand scene. I had never witnessed anything like it before. I had indeed seen more than one storm on a bold coast, but there is all the difference between a wave breaking on the shore and a wave in the open sea that there is between a caged lion and a lion in the desert. It is a great thing in these *nil admirari* days to be able to feel awe, and I experienced that sensation. Nature seemed so vast, so irresistible; man, so puny and weak. I had read many descriptions, both in prose and verse, of storms at sea, but had never caught an idea of the truth from them, so that I despair of being able to express what I felt. It was so absurd that I had ever reckoned the little lives and histories of my kind so highly. I caught a glimpse of the fact that we men, who give ourselves such airs, are but as mites in a cheese. Doubtless, there may be good mites and bad, wise mites and foolish, but when they are mashed up together with a lump of butter, at the point of a knife, they are merged in equal insignificance.

As an individual mite, however, I began to feel cold, wet, and uncomfortable, and commenced a series of acrobatic performances having for their object the attainment, first of the cabin-stairs, and then of my berth. In time all this was accomplished, though not without some bruises; then, perched on my shelf, I succeeded in getting rid of my wet outer garments, and rolling myself up in a blanket, was soon rocked to sleep.

I was awaked by a violent concussion. Have you ever, when going up-stairs in the dark, expected another step when you were on the level, and got a jerk which tried every nerve in your body? Well, that was the effect. Whether I was thrown out of my berth, or jumped down in a panic, I don't know. I remember trampling on something, which must have been the diamond merchant; stumbling into the saloon, catching a glimpse of three wild-eyed passengers, prostrate hitherto with sea-sickness, but now cured by fear; struggling up the cabin-stairs against a torrent of water which came pouring down them; and at last reaching the deck.

The day was breaking. The wind had gone down somewhat. A low line of coast was visible

in the distance. The steamer was aground, heeling over on her port-side, and the waves were buffeting her to pieces. I managed to climb to the star-board side of the funnel, the base of which prevented me from slipping along the steep deck, while the bulwarks and paddle-box behind formed a barrier against the violence of the waves.

But this latter advantage did not last long; plank by plank, paddle-box and bulwarks were torn to pieces, and the loose splinters were a fresh source of danger. A sailor clinging to the skylight over the engines, not far from my station, had his arms broken by a mass of wood and iron which was hurled against him; and then the waves, which now washed the deck without opposition, had him at their mercy. They rolled him back, away from me, then threw him forward almost to my feet, so that I could see his pitiful, appealing eyes; but before I could clutch him, they snatched him away again. So they worried him to death, and then sported with his corpse.

There were two boats; the captain and crew attempted to get one afloat; but the gear was out of order, or they were clumsy, or the situation was unfavourable. Any way, the boat was capsized, and some of those who were trying to launch it were, I think, crushed, judging by the cry I heard. The other boat, which was near me, had a side stove in, but amongst the ruins of it I saw the yellow rim of a life-buoy, which I determined to have. It was a task of peril and difficulty to reach the place, but I effected it, and there, inside the boat, clinging to the thwart, I found my old man, the diamond-merchant.

'Mine, mine!' he cried, when I had disentangled the life-buoy, and passed one of my arms through it. He could not have meant that it was his private property, because the name of the steamer was painted upon it; I suppose he had formed the intention to appropriate it before I came, and his strength had failed him. The boat proved a better protection than it had looked. When the large waves struck the stranded vessel, they rose up and enveloped her, flooding the decks with water, which poured off them again in cataracts. I found on each occasion that the boat was lifted at the same time that it was flooded, and this of course brought relief when the reflux came. I had not, as before, to cling hard to prevent being dragged away, the give of the boat as it floated and subsided easing the strain.

The vessel was settling down in the sands, burying herself as she swayed, burrowing like a mud-fish: it was plain that no living thing subject to drowning could remain with her long. It had been broad daylight now for hours; we were in the mouth of some river, for land could be seen on both sides. But no vessel coming to our assistance was visible. It was a mere question of time, however; the wind had gone down, and the sea was not too rough for a good boat; we were sure to be seen. With the aid of the life-buoy, a man might well float till he was picked up, and its value was evidently immense.

'Mine!' reiterated the old man, clutching at it as the boat was floated for a longer time than it had been yet. And when the water receded, and we were once more stranded on the deck, he felt in his breast, drew out a leather case, and cried: 'A fortune for it! a fortune for it!'

I looked at the nearest bank; it seemed quite

possible for a strong swimmer to reach it, and I was a very strong swimmer. Not probable, perhaps, but possible. Money was not worth steady industry, sustained self-denial, but it was well worth striking one blow for.

'On your word as a dying man,' I said, 'do you believe that if I survive, I shall get ten thousand for the seventy-five jewels?'

'Double, on my oath—double!'

I took my arm out of the life-buoy, and put it over his shoulder, at the same time receiving the leather case.

I had run up on deck in my shirt and drawers, and was pocketless; so I took off a handkerchief I had round my head, tied the jewels up in that, and then secured it about my waist.

I had hardly done this before the boat in which we were was washed clear of the deck, and as, though broken and full of water she proved too shallow and buoyant to go down, I still clung to her for a minute or so; but the waves washed so high over her gunwale, that I had to let go, and swim to a loose oar which was floating near. The old man was kept well out of the water by the buoy; I saw him a couple of waves off with his shoulders well above it. There was no spray now to drown him, for the wind had sunk to a whisper, and, if his strength lasted, he seemed safe. He had made a good purchase. As for my own prospects, my short trip from the boat to the support to which I now clung was sufficient to shew me that I had not enough left in me to swim ashore; no, nor half the way, nor a quarter of the way. My weight slightly submerged the oar, so that, when the crest of a large wave caught me, I got a ducking which robbed me of the breath I wanted so badly. But I could fight for a long time yet, having something to hold on by. Some part of the steamer which must have been tenable up to this time, was so no longer, for several fresh figures were suddenly to be seen in the water, clinging to anything that would float. Three of them made for the buoy, and two reached it, which sealed the fate of the diamond-merchant. Not that the buoy became useless; it was as good a support to the three men as my oar was to myself alone; but that was not enough for the old man, who required to be kept higher out of the water. I saw him still holding on for some time after he had ceased from all attempts to keep his head up; then he disappeared altogether. I nearly met the same fate; I was all but unconscious when a shore-boat came to my rescue. A sailor twisted his hand in the handkerchief tied round my waist, and sought to draw me into the boat by it. It gave way, and I dropped back again into the water. He caught me again by the arm, and dragged me back to life. But my diamonds, emeralds, and sapphires had gone to the bottom of the Scheldt.

For a few hours, and up to my chin in water all the time, I was a moderately rich man; all the rest of my life I have been a poor one. Oh! if that knot in my handkerchief had held, or if the Dutchman who rescued me had caught hold of my leg, or hair, or ear— But it is too provoking; I can't bear to think of it.

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